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ABSTRACT

Despite the recognized importance of school-level leadership, little attention has been given to principals' influence over teachers' daily work lives. This study tries to identify what principals do, through their actions and decisions, to affect teachers' working conditions. Since teacher engagement in their work affects student learning, the quality of teacher work life bears directly on this engagement--in turn influenced by the principals' actions. The research team observed, interacted with, and formally interviewed the principal, vice principals, and selected department heads in eight "ordinary" secondary schools located in midwestern metropolitan areas. Six were public schools, and two were Catholic schools. The study was guided by eight quality-of-work-life indicators: (1) respect from relevant adults; (2) participation in decision-making; (3) frequent and stimulating professional interactions among peers; (4) organizational structures and procedures allowing performance feedback; (5) opportunity to use skills and knowledge, learn new skills, and experiment; (6) adequate resources to carry out the job; and (7) congruence between personal and school goals. Although principals rarely mentioned the quality of teachers' work life as a high priority concern, their actions in nine specific areas did reveal this concern. The ways that administrators worked with students and dealt with classroom misbehavior affected teachers' work lives in two areas: (1) the respect teachers were accorded by students and administrators; and (2) teachers' ability to maintain a pleasant, orderly working environment. (34 references) (MLH)

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PROJECT ON THE EFFECTS OF THE SCHOOL AS A WORKPLACE ON TEACHERS' ENGAGEMENT

FIELD STUDY ON PRINCIPALS' MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS TO AFFECT TEACHER ENGAGEMENT

Richard A. Rossmiller, Principal Investigator

November 1988

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Secondary School Principals and the Quality of Teachers' Work Life

Richard A. Rossmiller[1]

A casual observer who listens in on the conversations which occur in a teachers' work room in most American secondary schools is likely to gain the impression that school principals (and other school-level administrators) play a role in determining the quality of teacher work life in that school. The question, however, is whether comments made by teachers in casual conversation with colleagues are primarily petty gripes reflecting minor inconveniences, or whether they represent serious concerns over actions (or lack of actions) taken by the school principal. This paper reports the results of a study in which principals and other school-level administrators were observed and interviewed in an attempt to identify and describe ways in which they affected the quality of teachers' work life by the actions they took or failed to take.

The early literature dealing with the school principalship tended to be replete with lists of musts, shoulds, and oughts (Jacobson, Reavis & Logsdan, 1954). In recent years, literature dealing with the principalship typically includes discussions of broader concepts such as leadership and decision making, as well as treating such common tasks as scheduling, pupil discipline, and supervising and evaluating instruction (Lipham, Rankin & Hoeh, 1985; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986). Recent publications dealing with the principalship discuss the principal's important leadership role as well as the realities of the principal's daily work load (Lipham, 1981; Snyder & Anderson, 1986).

The research on effective schools also has focused attention on the importance of school-level leadership provided either by the principal or by someone else at the school site. (Rosenholtz, 1985; Purkey & Smith, 1983). Advocates of site-based management and other proposals for restructuring schools to decentralize decision making have recognized either explicitly or implicitly the important role school principals must play if these plans are to be successful (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Caldwell & Spinks, 1988; Greenhalgh, J., 1984; Guthrie, Garms & Pierce, 1988).

Despite the recognition of the importance of school-level leadership, relatively little explicit attention has been paid to the ways in which principals affect the daily work lives of teachers. This study sought to identify concrete ways in which principals, through their actions and decisions, either directly

or indirectly affect the daily work lives of teachers. The research on which this paper is based was one aspect of the National Center on Effective Secondary School's study of the effects of the school as a work place on teacher's engagement.[2] In the proposal for this work we stated that engagement implies a state of energetic involvement directed toward one's preparation and classroom activity and, most of all, toward students. Engagement implies an intrinsic involvement in the task, a willingness to persist until the task is accomplished. Because engagement is a state of mind, it must be inferred from what teachers say and do. We began our field work with the assumption that teachers' engagement in their work affects student learning and that the quality of their work life bears directly upon teachers' engagement. Thus, to the extent that principals' actions are perceived by teachers to affect the quality of their work life, student learning should also be affected either positively or negatively.

The Data

As noted previously, this paper reports the results of a portion of the research project on "The Effects of the School as a Work Place on Teacher's Engagement," a part of the research agenda of the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools. We observed, interacted with, and formally interviewed the principal, vice principals, and selected department heads in eight secondary schools. These eight schools were not selected because of their unusual characteristics; they were selected because they represented "ordinary" high schools, that is, schools that did not have major innovations in either structure or practice.

All of the schools were located in midwestern metropolitan areas.[3] Six were public schools; two were located in high, two in middle, and two in low SES areas. One school, Quincy, was located in a small industrial city and drew students from all socioeconomic classes, although a majority of its students were from middle income homes and about one-half of them continued their education beyond high school. (All of the names for the schools are pseudonyms). One school, Charles Drew, was in a very poor, all black section of one of the 10 largest cities, which we will call The Metropolis. The rest of the schools were located in and around one of the 30 largest cities in the country, which we call The City.

Two of the high schools, Maple Heights and Cherry Glen North, were in suburbs where the population was generally well educated and where a large proportion held professional or managerial jobs. Pinehill was in a blue collar suburb with a student body rather similar to Quincy's with a relatively low percentage of the student body planning to attend college.

Ulysses S. Grant was located in an area of The City where demographic characteristics were changing, although its student body included some students from throughout the city. Most of the students at Ulysses S. Grant were from households where income was low, although not as low as in the neighborhood surrounding Charles Drew in The Metropolis.

We also visited two Catholic schools in The City. At St. Augustine's the student body was relatively large and from predominantly middle class households, whereas at St. Theresa's the student body was quite small and came from predominantly working class households.

Data Collection

In each of the eight schools we met with the principal to obtain information about the school; collect documents such as student test scores, faculty and student handbooks and the master schedule; and established dates for our visits. A member of the research team devoted one full day to shadowing and interviewing the principal, a full day to each assistant principal, and a half-day to each of several department heads. We kept a log of each administrator's daily schedule which identified the types of activities in which the administrator engaged and the individuals with whom the administrator interacted, with particular attention given to interactions and decisions which might affect the work life of teachers. After observing them for a full day, we interviewed each of the administrators at length using a standard, open-ended interview protocol. An average of eight days was spent observing and interviewing administrators in each school. (The research team observing and interviewing teachers averaged 22 days in each school.) Members of the two research teams exchanged information regularly and held a lengthy debriefing session after interviews and observations in each school were completed.

As noted previously, the schools we studied were selected purposively, not randomly. Thus, it is likely that there are biases in the sample. For example, no school served a clearly elite clientele, although Cherry Glen North was located in a district in which high income households predominated and where many adults held a college degree. However, it also had quite a few students from middle and low income households. None of the schools enrolled more than 2,000 students and only two enrolled less than 1,000--Maple Heights with about 750 students and St. Theresa with about 250.

We believe the principals in the schools we studied were quite secure in their jobs and not particularly threatened by the prospect of having a group of researchers "invade" their offices and classrooms for two or three weeks. It seems reasonable to assume that the principals in these eight schools were

sufficiently confident and secure to permit outsiders to take a close look at classroom practice, interview teachers, and, in a real sense, "look over their shoulder" for two or three weeks.

The Principal as Manager

The managerial role of the secondary school principal can be viewed from more than one theoretical perspective. Thompson (1967), for example, proposed that under norms of rationality, "organizations seek to buffer environmental influences by surrounding their technical cores with input and output components (p. 20)" and "seek to smooth input and output transactions (p. 21)." Although Thompson's examples were drawn from organizations involved in manufacturing (i.e., buffering was illustrated by stockpiling, preventive maintenance and warehousing), the concepts of buffering and smoothing could be used to describe the actions of a school principal. If one assumes that the technical core of a secondary school is the instructional activity that occurs in classrooms, laboratories, libraries, etc., then it is sensible for a principal to buffer teachers from distractions and interruptions which might interfere with the instructional process and thus interfere with student learning.

Hawley and Rosenholtz (1984), Rosenholtz (1985) and Rosenholtz, Bassler and Hoover-Dempsey (1986), drawing upon the literature on effective schools, have described ways in which effective principals buffer the technical core. Rosenholtz (1985) concluded that teachers in effective schools were buffered to a far greater extent than teachers in ineffective schools. In effective schools, for example, principals buffer teachers' time from frequent interruption; attend to material requirements and to the organization of instructional programs; and set clear expectations for student behavior through establishing rules and enforcing them consistently.

More recently, theorists have proposed other ways of viewing schools as organizations. March and Olsen (1976) have described schools as "organized anarchies"; Weick (1976) has described schools as "loosely coupled systems; and Meyer and Rowen (1978) claimed that the bureaucratic structure of schools is disconnected from instruction. In these "loose coupling theories", schools are viewed as "organizations with ambiguous goals, unclear technologies, fluid participation, uncoordinated activities, loosely connected structural elements, and a structure that has little effect on outcomes (Hoy & Miskel, 1987, p. 139)." Recent studies by Firestone and Herriott (1982) and Herriott and Firestone (1984) indicate that schools can be classified as belonging to one of two groups, rational bureaucracies or loosely coupled systems. They found that elementary schools were more likely to fall within the rational

bureaucracy cluster and secondary schools were more likely to be loosely coupled systems.

The present research sought to identify ways in which secondary school principals and other school-level administrators affect the quality of work life of the teachers in their school. It was not intended to refute or verify theory, or to classify secondary schools as either loosely coupled or bureaucratic organizations. However, such concepts as buffering, smoothing and coupling offered potentially useful ways of interpreting the actions of principals.

Of primary interest in this research were those actions which appeared to either enhance or detract from the quality of teachers' work lives and thus assumedly either increase or decrease their engagement with their work. Among the important indicators of quality of work life which guided our observations and data analysis are the following:

1. respect from relevant adults, such as the administrators in the school and district, parents, and the community at large (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Maeroff, 1988; Kahn, 1974);

2. participation in decision making that augments the teachers' sense of influence or control over their work setting (Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Sickler, 1988; Cohn, et al., 1987);

3. frequent and stimulating professional interaction among peers (e.g., collaborative work/collegial relationships) within the school (Little, 1984; Miles et al., 1986; Newmann et al., 1988);

4. Structures and procedures that contribute to a high sense of efficacy, e.g., mechanisms that permit teachers to obtain frequent and accurate positive and negative feedback about the specific effects of their performance on student learning (Rosenholtz, 1985);

5. opportunity to make full use of existing skills and knowledge, and to acquire new skills and knowledge; opportunity to experiment (Sederberg & Clark, 1987);

6. adequate resources to carry out the job; a pleasant, orderly physical working environment (Cohn et al., 1987; Public School Forum of North Carolina, 1987);

7. low alienation, or a sense of congruence between personal goals and the school's goals (Cohn et al., 1987; Metz, 1988; Louis & Miles, forthcoming).

Principals' Actions Affecting Teachers

The principals in the eight schools we observed, although heading schools which served distinctly different communities, all spent considerable time in activities which were quite clearly intended to shield the technical core of the school, and especially teachers, from annoyances and/or distractions which would reduce their engagement in their work or their commitment to the goals of the school as an organization.[4] Principals acted on the belief that the work done by teachers in classrooms represented the technical core of the educational production process, i.e., that a cause-effect relationship exists between classroom instruction and student learning. They relied on conventional wisdom, not research evidence, as the basis for their actions since, as several writers have pointed out, the educational production function remains largely unknown (Rossmiller, 1986; Hanushek, 1986).

The quality of teachers' worklife was rarely mentioned by principals and clearly was not their highest priority concern; students (and particulary student learning) were accorded the number one priority by a wide margin. This was evidenced both by the nature of the activities which occupied the bulk of their time and by their responses to questions posed in the interviews. Nevertheless, their actions also revealed concern for the quality of teacher work life, but primarily because of its perceived indirect effect on students. That is, these principals operated on the belief that students learned primarily as a result of the efforts of teachers and that teachers who were distracted by classroom interruptions or challenges to their professional judgment would not be fully engaged in their work. Therefore they used various means to shield them from untimely interruptions, disruptive students, irate parents, and misguided central office personnel. Their primary goal, however, was not to maintain or improve the quality of teachers' worklife but to optimize the learning environment for students.

The extent to which principals involved themselves in the instructional activities varied quite widely. One principal was heavily involved in instructional activities, i.e., the technical core. The school schedule was arranged so that all members of a given department had a common preparation period, which enabled the principal to work directly with teachers in that department on issues of curriculum and instruction. The focus of staff development activities was "learning styles" during the year in which our field work was conducted. The principal worked directly with individual teachers and with department faculties to teach them about student learning styles and to coach them in its application. At the opposite extreme was a principal who dealt primarily with department chairs, seldom held general faculty meetings, and did not appear to be much involved in issues of curriculum and instruction.

Several reasons why principals did not involve themselves more heavily in technical core activities can be identified. First, these secondary school principals readily admitted that they were not experts in all areas of the curriculum. Those who had been away from the classroom for several years may even have felt uncomfortable dealing with issues in their own teaching field. Consequently, they deferred to department chairs, subject matter specialists from the district's central office, or teachers on technical matters related to curriculum and instruction. Second, some principals felt that other pressing demands on their time prevented them from devoting the time necessary to achieve and maintain expertise in the various areas of the curriculum. Consequently, they concluded that reliance upon subject matter specialists such as department chairs or central office supervisors was more efficient and effective. Third, some principals were not especially interested in curriculum and preferred to spend their time dealing with other management areas. They delegated virtually all responsibility for matters of curriculum to central office personnel or to their department chairs. Only when serious questions or controversies arose did they attend to matters of curriculum and instruction.

While the principals varied quite widely in the amount of time they devoted to curriculum matters, they were confident of their ability to assess teaching performance and to recognize good teachers. When asked to describe teachers they would like to clone, their answers were remarkably similar in that two characteristics invariably were identified. One related to technical competence; the other to human relationships. The teachers they would like to clone were very knowledgeable in their subject, they could make it "come alive" for students, and they kept up-to-date in their field. With regard to human relationships, the teachers that principals would like to clone were characterized as "caring." They were able to convey to pupils a feeling that they were sincerely interested in them as individuals, that they respected and valued them as individual human beings. Principals were quick to point out that the teachers they would clone were not "soft." Very frequently they were demanding teachers who would not accept less then the student's best efforts because they wanted them to be successful both in school and in life.

With this general background, let us turn to specific actions by principals which had the potential to affect the quality of teachers' work life.

Working With the Central Office

Considerable tension existed between teachers and central office personnel in the two large city high schools in our sample. For example, when asked how teachers viewed the central

office staff of the district, Mr. Watson, the principal at Ulysses S. Grant, responded "arch enemies, constantly battling!" He commented further that "teachers refer to the school board as the Taj Mahal, or the palace, because they think it is not in touch with reality." The principal attributed much of the animosity between teachers and the school board/central office hierarchy to teacher strikes that had occurred several years before but also noted that "much goes back to the style of some of the supervisors of curriculum because they don't involve people." Referring to the school board and central office administrators, he noted that teachers ask:

> Who makes an administrative policy that says lower the suspension rates when the kids are worse than ever? Who is this person that says I've got to increase my grade point? Who is this person?

The query about grades was occasioned by a school board/central office concern for the high percentage of failing grades received by high school students which led to a directive to principals to "do something about it." In this instance, Mr. Watson chose not to shield teachers from the demands of the central office. Rather, he distributed a report to the entire faculty showing the distribution of grades given by each individual teacher and arranged to discuss the issue at an already scheduled staff development session. Many teachers were incensed at what they considered an uninformed, if not misguided, district policy, and by the challenge to their professional judgment in assigning grades to students. In this instance, teachers' quality of work life was diminished by what they viewed as a lack of respect for them as professionals on the part of the central office because the principal did not shield them from the effect of a directive which teachers took as evidence that central office administrators had lost touch with the reality of day-to-day life in the schools.

At Charles Drew, which was located in The Metropolis, the central office was viewed as being so distant from teachers that it had little or no effect on their work in classrooms. Dr. Thayer, the principal, did indicate that

> ...more often than not, central office is not very helpful either in terms of personnel or in terms of purchasing. You could name a department and I find that we have to operate in spite of that department, not because it helps us.

The central office in this district seemed to pose more frustration for school-level administrators than for teachers, although central office action or inaction affected the quality of teachers' work life indirectly.

This situation was illustrated vividly during the course of our visit to the school when the copy machine broke down and the supplier refused to repair it because a previous bill, which had been submitted to the central office for payment at least three times, had not been paid. This situation detracted from the quality of teachers' work life because they were unable to reproduce instructional materials for use in their classrooms, i.e., they were denied adequate resources to carry out their jobs. It became necessary for Dr. Thayer to deliver the necessary documentation to the district's business office and "camp out" there to make sure that a check was prepared and delivered to the supplier so that the copy machine could be returned to service. This incident provided an unfortunate, but fairly typical, example of the need for principals in large systems to shield teachers from the effects of an unresponsive central office staff.

Personnel selection and assignment is another area where conscientious principals may encounter difficulty with rule-bound central office bureaucrats. As the principal at Charles Drew stated:

> When you work for the board, you're supposed to take what they send you. You know, if you have lemons, you're supposed to make lemonade. Well, people aren't lemons and some people don't work out...If someone looks like they are going to be a lemon, don't take them!

Her refusal to accept personnel assigned by the central office resulted in confrontations because, in the words of Dr. Thayer:

> They say, 'When we send someone to you, you can't say that you won't take them'; and I say, 'go back to personnel. I'm sorry. I'm sure there must be an assignment for you someplace else in this system, but not here at Drew.' And personnel will say, 'Listen, you're not running your own personal personnel service out there! I am sending this person back to you.' And I say, 'don't do that because I'm sending them right back!'

By "making waves" Dr. Thayer generally was able to exercise some discretion in selecting personnel to staff the school, but not without incurring some ill will on the part of central office personnel. This principal was concerned about maintaining the integrity, competence, and professional interaction among teachers in each department and across the school. Rather than accepting a questionable appointment, she was willing to challenge personnel placements made by the central office and sometimes was successful in heading off inappropriate personnel assignments. Her actions in fending off teachers who would not

"fit in" at Drew, and in moving quickly to effect the transfer of new teachers who were unable to teach effectively at Drew, served to protect the quality of work life by striving to maintain productive professional interaction among teachers at the school.

The principal at Ulysses S. Grant, on the other hand, rarely (if ever) questioned personnel assignments made by the central office. When asked whether he would prefer to play a more active role in personnel assignments, Mr. Watson expressed satisfaction with the status quo, at least in part because he could not be blamed for new teachers who were unsuccessful. Under the existing system he had no direct responsibility to see to it that new teachers were successful. Thus, he did not to attempt to shield the staff from the effects of central office decisions concerning the assignment of personnel to Grant.

In the smaller school districts, relations between the school and the central office were much less antagonistic. Principals in the districts which had one, two or three high schools rarely found it necessary to shield their teachers from central office personnel. Where it was necessary, it generally involved a specific individual, not the central office per se. At Cherry Glen North, for example, the principal commented that teachers in his building worked directly with the assistant superintendents for personnel and for curriculum. When the principal at Quincy was asked how teachers viewed central office consultants he replied, "It depends on the leadership capabilities and qualities of the individual. There are a lot of people who are viewed as helpful and supportive and cooperative...some are viewed as being meddlers and complainers." In the smaller school districts teachers were more likely to know central office personnel personally, which apparently made it much easier for teachers to accept them as individuals.

At two schools, Pinehill and Maple Heights, the high school building also housed the central office of the school district. Principals in these schools tended to encounter a problem opposite from that we observed in the two high schools in large city districts. Namely, the superintendent's office was too close, making it easy for teachers to bypass the principal's office. The principal at Pinehill was most candid in his observation, stating that, "it's like big brother is watching you all the time." In Maple Glen, the proximity of the central office staff facilitated communication with teachers and permitted stimulating professional interaction to take place so that it rarely was necessary for the principal to shield teachers from the central office. On the other hand, because space was at a premium, some Maple Grove teachers thought that moving the central office out of the high school would create some much needed office and classroom space.

Labor relations was one area in which principals could not shield teachers from the effects of school board/central office activity. This was, especially true during the negotiation of a new contract. The quality of teachers' work life suffered because of what many perceived to be a lack of respect from the school board and a lack of correspondence between their personal goals and the goals of the school board/central office. Each of the principals commented on how teacher morale had been affected adversely during contract negotiations, which were quite protracted in several of these school districts. Principals, although nominally part of "management," generally were no better informed than teachers as to the progress of negotiations and thus were unable to allay fears or correct misinformation. They found this to be very frustrating because they were virtually powerless to take constructive action in a situation which clearly affected the work life of teachers in the school. The principal at Maple Heights described what had happened during a year in which the school board and teachers' union were unable to reach agreement on a contract:

It took the whole school year to settle. It wasn't settled until about a day or two before graduation. They (the teachers) went a whole year without a contract. Letters to the editor, letters to community members, half truths, arguments, lies, bitter disputes were all carried in the paper. It was a very divisive time.... It was just not a good time.

Working With Parents and Community Members

Whereas shielding teachers from the demands/actions of central office personnel involved the school principal almost exclusively, nearly all members of the school's administrative team worked with parents and community members at one time or another. Furthermore, their actions often were designed to either increase or decrease the interaction between parents, community members and teachers depending upon the situation. At times the principal sought to insulate teachers from unwarranted demands by parents or other community members in cases involving grades, discipline, etc. At other times the major problem was thought to be too little parental involvement with the school. Where this was the case, principals sought mechanisms and processes which created situations encouraging greater interaction between parents and teachers, e.g., holding an open house, arranging parent-teacher conferences, or requiring parents to pick up report cards at the school.

Shielding or Mediating Activity

Shielding or mediating activity typically involved potential or actual confrontations between a teacher and a parent who is concerned about a student's grade or about a disciplinary action taken against the student. It was most evident in schools

serving economically advantaged communities in which parents hold an expectation that their children will be admitted to the "right" college and are likely to be more assertive. Thus, a failing grade is cause for alarm and too frequently is assumed by the parent to be the fault of the teacher, not the student.

In describing his role in potential parent-teacher conflicts, the principal at Maple Heights High School commented:

> Autonomy, I think is among the most important things that we can provide for a good teacher.... I think in terms of parent-student squabbles that they may get into -- disagreements with parents over whatever it might be -- that it is terribly important that they know that they can rely on me, at least in public, to support them. I think that is a duty I have. Now, what I do privately may, indeed, be another matter. But in front of the parent, in front of the student, in front of the family attorney, or whoever who might gather in here, the fact that I truly support that teacher, specially a good teacher, that's real important!

Principals generally recognized that mediating parent-teacher disputes was part of their job. For example, in discussing the point at which he became personally involved in student disciplinary cases, Mr. Coyne, Principal at Cherry Glen North High School, indicated it generally was at the discretion of the assistant principals:

If they feel that it is time that I have a discussion with a student and a parent, or if the parent is particularly violent and they want me to get involved, they tell me. Then, if we put a kid on probation after repetitive disciplinary things, I am the person that does that and has the conference with the parent and the kid and lays out chapter and verse as to how it is going to be.... Here and there, you get somebody who is going to the wall with you. But that's part of the ball game, I guess.

Mr. Coyne's comment suggests that most potential conflicts with parents are resolved satisfactorily. Our observations during the time we spent shadowing principals and assistant principals support this conclusion. Virtually every administrator we shadowed at some time during the course of the day engaged in a telephone conversation or had a face-to-face meeting with a parent concerning their son or daughter's academic standing or behavior. These episodes rarely were confrontational in nature; rather, the emphasis was on how the school could work with the parent to resolve the problem and generally resulted in agreement on a course of action.

Some cases, of course, were not resolved. All of the eight schools we observed either had been involved in legal actions brought by parents within the preceding year or were involved in

such actions at the time of our visit. The majority involved situations in which a student had been injured, allegedly because of negligence on the part of school personnel, although some were cases involving disciplinary actions such as a student's suspension or expulsion from school. Often the principal's first knowledge of a dispute between a teacher and a parent is the result of a phone call from an angry parent. The parent typically either has failed to resolve the issue with the teacher involved or has come directly to the principal without first contacting the teacher. The principal's task, then, becomes one of mediating, i.e., obtaining each side of the story, sorting out the facts, and arriving at a resolution that is acceptable to both the parent and the teacher. Principals were quite candid in stating that they were much more likely to "go to bat" for a teacher whose judgment and discretion they had come to trust. In terms of quality of work life, they attempted to have a parent respect, if not agree with, the teacher's professional judgment and to involve teachers actively in decisions which might affect their work. Even with other teachers, they tried to be as publicly supportive of them as possible. Privately, however, they would point out the teacher's error in an effort to forestall similar problems in the future. Principals recognized, however, that they could not condone teachers' actions which were quite clearly inappropriate or indefensible and would not attempt to shield teachers in such instances. They believed that doing so would jeopardize the community's respect for all teachers in the school as well as its respect for the principal.

Improving Home-School Relations

We observed several programs or activities which principals had initiated to reduce the likelihood of parent-teacher confrontations. For example, each of the eight schools we visited had organized one or more support groups for students from families which were experiencing stress. Some of these groups were formally organized and held regular meetings before, during or after school hours. Other support groups were quite informal and met "as needed". Guidance counselors and/or teachers met with students whose parents were experiencing marital stress, serious illness, or incarceration to discuss their feelings and provide support, and to help them identify other individuals or agencies in the community that might provide assistance. (Similar groups existed in nearly every school to provide support to students who were dealing with the suicide of a close friend or relative, or who themselves had exhibited suicidal tendencies, as well as to help students attempting to deal with alcohol or drug-related problems.)

Principals recognized that students who were preoccupied with personal problems associated with the separation or divorce of parents, the death of a close friend or relative, or the use of alcohol and drugs, were unlikely to be fully engaged in

academic subjects. Thus, they viewed support groups of various types as essential if these students were to have any chance of academic success. They also believed it important that teachers be aware of the potentially disruptive influence of problems students were experiencing outside the school. Non-privileged information concerning a student's personal problems generally was communicated to teachers of that student, especially to teachers of classes in which the student was doing poorly. It was hoped that sharing such information with teachers would help reduce teacher-student tension, thus reducing classroom disruptions and enhancing the engagement of all students. It also served to involve teachers in decisions that affected their classroom and increased interaction among teachers and counselors.

A third type of activity related to the multiple, and frequently conflicting, expectations for the school held by community members. These ranged from, as one principal put it, "people who live in the community who think schools are the same now as they were back in 1945," to those who expect schools to be all things to all students. For example, Mr. Mortinson, principal at Maple Heights, described a conversation with an elderly member of the community:

> He told me last fall that if we only had a dress code, all of our problems would go away and he was absolutely serious about that! First, I kind of cajoled him saying, 'are you really serious about that?' and he was!

Mr. Mortinson went on to describe the ambivalence which characterized community members' views toward the high school as follows:

> We have people who believe that if we only got tougher everything would be fine. Or if we only made them cut their hair.... By and large, this community is as socially conscious -- as much of a child advocate community as I've seen -- so they will tend for us to be cautious, careful and caring, which is fertile ground for all kinds of things in terms of enabling kids to do just what we don't want them to do. Drugs, alcohol, punctuality, attendance, trusting, all those kinds of things.... So what I find is this constant shifting of 'if we were only tougher, or if we only weren't quite so tough.' ... there is that constant wavering and shifting back and forth. We would like to have more merit scholars but we sure don't want to drive any more kids into depression. We would like our kids to compare better at the state university but do we have to assign so much homework during homecoming week? Its just back and forth about that sort of thing.

Principals are called upon to mediate and arbitrate differences in expectations held for the school by members of the community. Failure to perform this task successfully exposes teachers to direct threats to their autonomy and discretion as professionals. Such invasions of professional autonomy and discretion may take the form of challenges to the use of a particular textbook or reading assignment, a crusade to ban certain books from the school library, or even requirements concerning the amount and type of homework to be assigned. Thus, by interpreting for teachers the multiple and frequently conflicting demands of community members and shielding them from conflicting demands when possible, principals can affect the quality of the teacher's work life by reducing their sense of alienation from the community.

Tightening the School-Community Bond

In some schools the principal's primary concern was for the lack of community and parental involvement in school activities, that is, overcoming the apathy of parents and community rather than defusing their anger. Too little involvement on the part of parents may be just as detrimental to the quality of a teacher's work life as too much involvement, since it conveys an impression that the teacher's work is not accorded respect by parents or the community at large; that it is unimportant and unvalued. Principals often devote considerable time and energy (their own as well as that of teachers) to increase parental and community involvement in school affairs. Unlike the activities discussed previously, these activities are generally initiated and controlled by the school. They include such things as holding an open house for parents, maintaining parent advisory committees, and using community volunteers. Cherry Glen North, for example, had well over 100 parents or community members who did volunteer work in the school. The principal commented,

> We try to get as many people into the building as we can because my experience is that if you get them in here, they become your allies. They give credibility to your problems. They see the needs and are invaluable to continuity and also to the attitude of the kids in the building.

Other schools, however, had less success with parent volunteers. At Quincy, the principal reported little success in recruiting volunteers, although he did note with pride the very active parent booster club which worked with the school's music department. Charles Drew and Ulysses S. Grant, the two high schools located in large cities, made little use of parent volunteers. The principal at Charles Drew, commented:

> I'm not sure I even encourage them (volunteers). A volunteer, in order to help you, has to have some skill and

> training to be able to help you do the things you want done. I'm not sure that we have the time to train volunteers so they can be of real assistance.... We have had parents that volunteered and what it really boiled down to was, we had to provide supervision for them.

The teacher-advisor program at St. Augustine High School (a private school) fostered close contact between teachers and the parents of their advisees. In describing the parent-teacher relationship, the principal commented:

> Its a pretty warm relationship and I think part of that is because of what we have tried to establish with the parents. The minute they (students) come in as eighth graders, they are tested by whoever is going to be assigned to them as a teacher-advisor. That person meets with the parents to register the kids, and presumably there is a lot of contact with them.

As evidence of the close relationship which existed between many teachers and parents at St. Augustine, the principal mentioned that one will frequently find teachers sitting with parents week after week at basketball games, or at a class play, or at other school activities.

Several schools used an "open house" to entice parents into the school building and acquaint them with teachers. Open houses reportedly were most effective, at least in terms of attracting a large turnout of parents, in the higher socioeconomic status communities in which parents already tended to be quite heavily involved in school activities. Parent-teacher conferences, either in lieu of or in addition to report cards, were used in several schools as a means to acquaint parents with the teachers of their son or daughter. Principals observed that parents of students who were doing well typically attended such conferences diligently and parents of students who were most at risk were least likely to attend them. Thus, the parent-teacher conference seemed to be least successful in facilitating interaction between teachers and the parents of children who were least engaged in academic work.

Parents were members of curriculum committees or advisory committees at several of the schools. At Quincy, for example, the district had system-wide curriculum and advisory committees which included parent members. However, a common concern voiced by the principals was that these activities attracted the same parents. As the principal at Pinehill High School noted,

> The ones that back the school are the ones that participate with their sons and daughters in activities. So you get the same group that comes through -- the choir, the band, the athletics.

Principals indicated that involving parents and community members appropriately in school affairs was one of the most difficult and demanding aspects of their job. Mr. Mortinson, principal at Maple Heights, commented:

> Parent involvement is a touchy business, as I have found out more and more in the last couple of years. What we try to do is identify a group of people who somehow indicate that they are interested. I use the parents' council as a resource group and try to involve them in those areas that need or seem to want the most attention.... When a group brings an issue that needs attention, I always rely on them to help me solve that problem. I tell them 'there isn't any way that I can do that myself, I'm not smart enough, I don't have enough energy, and I have other things to do.' They seem to buy that so when they come to me, or when they come to the parents' council, its with the understanding that if we need attention somewhere, then they are going to provide the manpower to do it.

The principal's involvement in mediating between teachers and working with the community was very strongly affected by the nature of the community. In the schools serving communities of relatively high socioeconomic status where college going was the normative expectation, principals tended to be involved more frequently in shielding teachers from the ire of disgruntled parents. However, principals in these schools also were more likely to initiate activities or devise organizational structures and procedures which would more actively involve parents or other community members in the work of the school. In schools serving lower socioeconomic areas, principals were more likely to be confronted with apathy than with insurrection on the part of parents. Principals in these schools struggled to find appropriate ways to enhance parent-teacher interaction and to find effective ways to involve parents more actively in school affairs. Because of its potential for disruption and conflict, creating and maintaining an effective school-community interface was regarded by principals as one of the most difficult and demanding aspects of their job.

In terms of teachers' quality of work life, the school-community interface affected teachers' perceptions of the respect accorded them by parents and community members, the extent to which they perceived that their personal goals and the school's goals were congruent and their sense of influence or control over their work setting. The skill and sensitivity of the principal in building and maintaining the relationships between the school and community was an important factor in the quality of work life enjoyed by teachers. Although the challenges in this area differed in high and low socioeconomic communities, the quality of the school-community interface appeared to be more a function of the principal's skill and sensitivity in managing these

relationships than of the community's socioeconomic level.

Working With Teachers

The task of mediating disputes between individual teachers or groups of teachers is seldom mentioned by school principals, but it is one that is readily observed when one spends time shadowing a principal. It is inevitable that disagreements will arise among and between teachers in a large secondary school. No matter how careful the personnel selection effort, individual teachers, even those within a given department, do not always hold the same values and beliefs as their colleagues. Many of the actions taken and the activities initiated by principals are designed to forestall open warfare between individual teachers or groups of teachers in the school. In fact, when active mediation becomes necessary, it may signal that the principal's preventive activities have been either inadequate or unsuccessful.

Shielding teachers from each other typically involves all members of the school administrative staff to some degree. Although the principal generally plays the leading role in resolving heated disputes between teachers and disputes between departments, department heads and assistant principals also may be involved in these activities. Their involvement will depend on how broadly or narrowly their role is defined. In secondary schools where department heads have supervisory responsibility, they may play an important role; in schools where their job is primarily clerical, they may have little involvement. Similarly, in schools where assistant principals have responsibility for classroom supervision, they will be involved; if their responsibilities are primarily related to student discipline they are less likely to be involved in mediating between teachers unless it involves the action they have taken with regard to a particular student disciplinary case. We witnessed several instances where principals were actively involved in mediating between individual teachers or groups of teachers. An example of each type of situation will illustrate such activities.

At Charles Drew High School, a teacher had lodged a formal complaint against a colleague. The two teachers used the same classroom at different hours during the day, a classroom which was equipped with computers and in which the instruction was computer-based. The teacher lodging the complaint, Mrs. Green, claimed that the other teacher, Mr. Concord, left the classroom in disarray and that the computers were not returned to a state of readiness for use by her class. (While shadowing Mr. Hawkins, one of the assistant principals, the observer had occasion to visit Mr. Concord's class and noted that he had great difficult bringing the class to order, that he did not know the students by name, and that classroom management posed a serious problem for him.) Later in the day Mr. Hawkins met with the two teachers to discuss Mrs. Green's complaints. Although the observer was excused from this meeting because the two teachers preferred that

he not be present, Mr. Hawkins later reported that the meeting did not go well and that the issues were not resolved.

Dr. Thayer, the principal, was aware of the problems Mr. Concord was having and became directly involved in attempting to resolve the dispute between Mrs. Green and Mr. Concord. She met several times with Concord, who had been assigned to the school after the school year started to replace a teacher who became seriously ill. Concord had experienced serious problems with classroom management from the outset and these problems continued despite the advice, counsel, and coaching he received from Mr. Hawkins, Dr. Thayer, and his department head. While the observer was shadowing Dr. Thayer, Mrs. Green conferred with her about the problem. (Again, the observer was excused from this meeting at the request of Mrs. Green.) The situation ultimately was resolved when Mr. Concord requested an administrative transfer to another school. Dr. Thayer described her role in resolving this dispute between two teachers as follows:

> When we get teachers who don't work out in this school, I try to talk with them and convince them that they should be someplace else. The last conference I had with that teacher (Mr. Concord), he requested an administrative transfer and I am working with him to help him get one, because he should not be at Drew.

In this instance the mediating efforts of the assistant principal and the principal were not successful. Dr. Thayer finally decided that the dispute could not be resolved to the satisfaction of the two teachers, and that Concord had lost the respect of his peers and his students to the point where his relationships with them had deteriorated beyond repair. Thus, she concluded that his transfer to another school (at his request) would be less damaging to overall staff morale and engagement than would trying to retain him at Charles Drew.

An episode which occurred while the research team was at Pinehill High School illustrates the difficulty a principal encountered in mediating between groups of teachers. An increase in high school graduation requirements has been one of the reforms most commonly mandated by state legislative bodies in recent years. One effect of these requirements is to reduce the number of elective courses which may be taken by students. This, in turn, has placed considerable pressure on departments which offer mainly elective courses to maintain their enrollments. Failure to maintain enrollment reduces the need for teachers in the department and thus directly threatens their job security.

At Pinehill, teachers of elective courses were much more concerned about the changing graduation requirements than were those who taught in required academic courses. Comments made by the chair of the business department are illustrative:

> Just like the other things that are going on, like (the State Department of Public Instruction) kicking up the academics that are required and/or the administration allowing social studies to have two years of U.S. History. I'm not saying they shouldn't do that if they think that's the best for their program and their students, but before its in concrete, why don't you let all of the department chairs know so that we can address some of the problems that it might cause? We found out about it when it was offered, when it was in. It almost destroyed our sophomore typing program. It left no elective on the sophomore level.... It practically destroyed our beginning typing program.

Partially in response to this threat, the business department developed a new course entitled "Successful Sales." The department chair stated:

> We are going to start it out (for students in) their junior or senior year. If it flies, then we are going to turn it into a two-year program and in the senior year try and split it ... there are lots of kids here at Pinehill who don't go on to school, don't take any skill training, and yet want to have employment when they get out of here. Maybe we can give them a little background in sales, inventory, selling, so they may be able to get that job quicker.

The chair of the social studies department, on the other hand, made no comment on the two-year requirement in U.S. History. In fact, department chairs and teachers in the academic subjects seemed unaware of the concerns being expressed by teachers of elective subjects concerning the effect of the new graduation requirements on their enrollment.

The principal, although apparently aware of this developing problem, had taken no action to "head it off." The requirement of two years of U.S. History was imposed at the school district level, not by the state. It was not discussed by the department chairs in their meetings with the principal and it had not been discussed by the faculty prior to its adoption by the school board. In this instance the principal's failure to anticipate and deal with the problems which might arise from the new policy led to a breakdown in professional interaction and seriously threatened collegial relationships between the teachers in different departments, thus diminishing the quality of their work life.

Tension also was manifest in the relationships between teachers in the business department and the home arts department. These teachers perceived that they were in competition for a scarce resource -- students. Consequently, teachers in one department would nit pick activities in the other department.

For example, during our visit one home arts class scheduled a field trip and students in that class missed their business class that day. The chair of the business department emphatically expressed her concern to the principal, Mr. Taylor, and reminded him of the school's rule concerning field trips which apparently had not been followed to the letter in this instance.

Building Faculty Cohesion

Organizational culture has attracted considerable attention in recent years, in part as a result of its prominence in contemporary business literature. Culture refers to the shared assumptions, values and norms which hold an organization together and give it an identity (Hoy & Miskel, 1987). It is impossible to comprehend a school's culture by spending a few days observing and interviewing teachers and administrators. At best, one can sense some of the more obvious attributes of the school's culture. Similarly, we cannot claim to have seen principals deftly building and shaping the culture of the school. We did note, however, two principals who had clearly influenced the shared attitudes, values and norms of organizational members--the customary patterns of behavior and "the way we do things here".

Dr. Thayer, the principal at Charles Drew, worked very hard to communicate to the faculty her vision for the school and to convince them that students in this impoverished ghetto community were entitled to be challenged by a rigorous curriculum and to be treated with respect. The daily schedule was arranged so that all teachers in a single department shared a common preparation period. This enabled departments to, in the words of the principal, "pull together as a department and as a team." It also enabled the principal to work with each department on curriculum matters, and to share with them her vision for the school. In addition, it provided an opportunity for teachers who were teaching the same subject matter to work closely together and to share common concerns and common needs. Staff development meetings of the entire faculty were held regularly and were built around topics of common interest. In describing her approach to building the school's culture, Dr. Thayer stated:

> I had to have a small cadre of teachers who shared my vision for the school, who were competent in their own right, and who could influence other teachers. So, I started with a small cadre of teachers and started working on things like staff development.... I worked with a small cadre of people always trying to enlarge that group; always trying to expand outward; always trying to make that cadre of people feel very special so that other people would want to be part of that cadre.

Observations of classes and interviews with teachers made it

quite clear, however, that teachers differed in their perceptions of the school's culture and their commitment to the principal's vision for the school (Metz, 1988). Recognizing that not all teachers shared her vision for Charles Drew, Dr. Thayer made extensive use of staff development activities in an attempt to build staff cohesion. She attended many educational conferences and often used the information she obtained as the basis for staff development activities. The focus of these activities at the time of our visit was "learning styles"; during a previous year it had been "problem solving". Dr. Simmons arranged for three teachers to attend a one-week workshop on learning styles and also held an awareness workshop for interested teachers which was held off-campus at a popular resort and convention center. Two instructional coordinator positions were established and those individuals worked directly with individual teachers to help them apply learning style techniques in their classroom instruction. Dr. Thayer also worked directly with individual teachers, as she explained:

I'm working on a new model this year and I think its going to work very well. I assessed each freshman division teacher's teaching style. I had a personal conference with each teacher and went over their personal profile. They identified areas where they would like to start to work to improve their profile. We discussed...what I would be looking for (when visiting their classroom).

This principal's culture building activities with teachers related to the quality of their work life by helping them acquire new skills and knowledge, encouraging their involvement in decision making, and facilitating frequent professional interaction with peers.

Mr. Coyne had been principal at Cherry Glen North for well over 20 years. He took pride in the detailed descriptions for each teacher's job and the attention he gave to organizational details and, indeed, the school ran like a well-oiled machine. At the same time, he went out of his way to recognize achievements by teachers and students with hand-written notes of congratulation and appreciation and with reports of their achievements published in the school newsletter which was distributed widely in the community.

Mr. Coyne drew a clear distinction between administrative and curricular matters. Teachers enjoyed considerable discretion in curricular matters and were free to innovate and experiment within their curricular area so long as they could demonstrate support in their field for what they were attempting to do. In administrative matters, however, Mr. Coyne employed the hierarchical approach which he perceived was expected by the community, a high income suburb in which a substantial percentage of the adults were college graduates who held professional or

managerial positions. He had written a detailed teacher's handbook and a handbook detailing the duties of the leaders of all co-curricular activities; had developed a system of forms for reporting on all aspects of the school's activities; and had taken steps to see that regular grading of students was documented and that sections of the same course taught by different teachers followed a common syllabus and set similar tasks for students. In return, teachers who could document what they had done and their reasons for doing it could count on strong support from Mr. Coyne if their actions were challenged by parents or community members.

In his early years at the school Mr. Coyne had shaped the culture of the school by careful selection of faculty. Many of the older teachers told of being invited to apply for a position at Cherry Glen North. In recent years, when the district moved ninth graders from junior high to senior high school, a large group of junior high school teachers were transferred along with the students. Mr. Coyne recounted that he had worked very hard to socialize this new group of teachers to the way things were done at Cherry Grove North.

Department chairs at Cherry Glen North were appointed by the principal and seemed to play a role in socializing new teachers and maintaining the culture of the school. As one department chair commented:

> Most of us were hired by one man (Mr. Coyne). I think we kind of reflect his philosophy or we wouldn't of been hired. Maybe that does a great deal if you have an administrative leader or a group of leaders for a long period of time--maybe you get some continuity.... I told the department heads once in a meeting--and some of them were a little offended but it was humorous--I said, 'you know we are department heads because we are somewhat like our boss. We wouldn't have been chosen to be department head if we weren't achievers and didn't want to improve our department and didn't have goals and objectives and weren't somewhat organized.' The art department chair told me, 'Gee, I was really upset with you when you said that. I thought about it for two nights. I could hardly sleep because I always see my boss as being too organized and I'm kind of a carefree guy and stuff. Then I started looking at the art department and I am the most organized, the one that is always trying to get things done and improve the program. I guess from that perspective, I'm the most likely.'

Mr. Coyne also used faculty meetings and staff development activities to build faculty cohesion. His role in these activities was much less obvious than that of Dr. Thayer at Charles Drew, perhaps because the faculty culture at Cherry Glen was more clearly defined and established. We observed a faculty

meeting at Cherry Glen in which Mr. Coyne took no visible role but which he had planned. The meeting was conducted by a faculty member and members of the industrial education and business education departments reported on the results of an innovative instructional activity they had used successfully. When asked about his role in planning the meeting, Mr. Coyne responded:

> You see, I was trying to bridge another step....Here is where they know you understand their program. We ... understand what the needs are. Now the question is, how do you strategize to get to it, and do that in a whole variety of areas. The industrial ed people started out with this proposal that they presented yesterday and we experimented with that, and that grew into a research project. They went further with it and finally tried it at both senior high schools. So we gave the nod to that, and then talked about how is it working and what effects are you having with it? And then we said, 'Gee, you know I think maybe that's a pretty good idea. Would you be willing to share it with the staff? You're excited and enthused about it.' The business ed people picked it up as a idea last year. So, I thought well I'll bring them both in now, if they are willing, and give the staff an up-date as to where they are. So, a lot of it flows if you can look to the long range planning of what it is you are trying to accomplish.

In sum, Mr. Coyne's efforts to build staff cohesion were related to teachers' quality of work life in several ways. His attention to administrative details helped in maintaining respect from parents and community members by insuring that teachers' actions were defensible. Teachers' control of curriculum enabled them to participate in decisions that affected their work, facilitated frequent professional interaction--and sometimes collaboration--among teachers, and through the vehicle of faculty meetings, afforded teachers an opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge.

Principals in the other six schools we observed also employed a variety of strategies and procedures in an attempt to build common understanding among teachers and thus forestall disputes and confrontations. Although each of the schools held regular meetings of the entire faculty, some used the faculty meeting to build cohesion and reinforce the school's culture; others simply used the faculty meeting to share information. At St. Augustine, a private secondary school, the entire faculty met several times monthly for a large group presentation followed by small group discussion, a procedure which was viewed as very important in achieving shared commitment to the values and goals of the school. A regularly scheduled faculty meeting also was used at Maple Heights, where faculty members met on one day each week for 25 minutes prior to the start of school. The meetings at Maple Heights, although chaired by the principal, were

relatively informal and provided an opportunity to share information and develop social relationships among faculty members.

The principals of these eight schools recognized the importance of involving teachers in decisions which affected their work life. However, they were not equally skillful in involving teachers appropriately (or perhaps their psychological commitment to teacher involvement did not match their verbal commitment). Nevertheless, all of them talked about the importance of achieving the commitment of teachers to the school's goals and objectives, and to the importance of involving teachers in defining and prioritizing those goals and objectives.

Working With Students

Students have a profound effect on the quality of a high school teacher's work life. Teachers spend the greatest part of their working day with students and, in a very real sense, students define the teacher's success because teachers tend to gauge their success by the reactions and the academic growth of students (Lortie, 1975). Two of the administrators we interviewed stated succinctly the effect of students on teachers' engagement in their work.

Dr. Thayer, principal at Charles Drew, stated:

> ... students affect them (teachers) both positively and negatively. I think students are the cause of teachers' frustration. I think that many of the teachers want to do a good job but they are frustrated because they haven't quite found the way to work with some students and, because they do try, and the students don't make the kind of progress that they would like for them to make, it becomes very frustrating for them. Conversely, when students do make progress, it shows them that they are at least making some inroads -- it makes their day!

A vice principal at St. Augustine High School, in responding to a query as to what really engages teachers in their work, said:

> The number one thing is positive feedback from kids. There is no substitute for that! You can have a department head that you don't like; you can have an administration that you just stay away from; but if kids are telling you 'you're dynamite!'....there is no better way to motivate a teacher than to have that teacher get positive feedback from the kids he teaches.

Unfortunately, the feedback that teachers receive from their

students is not always positive. Frequent tardiness, consistent failure to complete assignments, inattentiveness when in class, and overt misbehavior on the part of students all provide negative feedback, signaling that students find little value in what the teacher has to offer and do not respect the teacher. Through their handling of student discipline arising from classroom incidents, principals can have a powerful effect on the quality of teachers' work life.

The handling of student discipline frequently is frustrating for both teachers and principals. Teachers are often frustrated by what they perceive to be inconsistent or unpredictable disciplinary actions by principals. On the other hand, principals are frustrated by the wide variance in the ability of teachers to handle classroom discipline. This frustration was expressed clearly by a Dean of Students when he stated:

> From my point of view, it sometimes becomes disheartening because many times students are sent to me by the same particular teacher. I guess that is human nature. I see a student coming with this teacher and I say to myself, 'Oh no! here we go again.' If I get a student from a teacher who never sends somebody down here, then I say, 'Hey! this guy is really a problem!'

The schools we observed used similar methods in dealing with student discipline but differed in their implementation of specific disciplinary procedures. Each of the schools used some type of detention where students were required to remain after regular school hours; several of the schools used in-school suspension in which students were confined to a particular room during the school day; three of the schools maintained an "outpost" located away from the regular school grounds which functioned as a school-within-a-school for students who were at-risk or who were chronic offenders; and suspension or expulsion was a last resort at each of the schools. The task of shielding teachers from the demoralizing effects of disruptive students involved several members of the administrative staff at each school, depending upon its size and organization. Assistant principals and/or the dean of students were always involved and occasionally guidance personnel were involved in disciplinary cases, with the principal invariably involved in serious disciplinary problems, especially when suspension or expulsion was considered.

A common problem expressed by the administrators involved in student discipline was the lack of effective options available to them, i.e., options which were likely to change the offending student's unacceptable behavior. This was particularly the case when they were dealing with students who were chronic offenders. While revoking privileges such as participation in co-curricular activities was effective for many students, most chronic

offenders were not involved in co-curricular activities and detention after school rarely fazed them because they frequently "forgot" to report to the detention room.

In-school suspension had been adopted by several of the schools as a way of removing disruptive students from classrooms while retaining them under the school's control. In some schools in-school suspension was essentially punitive in nature. Students were required to spend the entire day in the in-school suspension room; their assignments in each class were provided; talking was forbidden; lunch was brought to the room; and contact with other students was not permitted during the day. Other schools attempted to use in-school suspension as both a punishment and as an opportunity to reform the chronic offenders. In addition to requiring students to work on their regular class assignments, guest speakers and group discussions were used to encourage students to reexamine their goals and behavior in school.

Similar in concept was the assignment of students to an alternative program in a separate location. An "outpost" which provided an alternative secondary school program for students who were "at-risk" was operated at both Drew and Grant, the two large city high schools included in our sample, and at Cherry Glen, one of the higher socioeconomic level suburbs. (A similar program had been operated at Quincy but was not being used during the year we observed the school.) The alternative programs typically involved a team of teachers who were especially skillful in working closely with students whose learning needs or behavioral idiosyncracies could not easily be accommodated in the regular high school program.

The final two alternatives were suspension, typically for three days, of students whose behavior could not be tolerated in regular classrooms or alternative programs, followed by expulsion as a last resort. If the building principal had not previously been involved in a student's discipline, they always became involved at this juncture to insure that the procedural requirements specified in state statutes or administrative rules were observed. The procedure invariably involved a conference with parents of the offending student as a condition of readmission. Suspension sometimes was viewed as a "shock treatment" to make the student, the parents, or both aware of the seriousness of the situation.

Expulsion of the student was used sparingly, not only because it involved a tacit admission of failure, but also because it required much time and effort in preparing the documentation needed for a hearing before the board of education and required formal action by the board of education to expel the student. Even suspension was viewed with misgivings because it too frequently was exactly what the student was seeking. The principal at Pinehill related an incident involving a school

board member that illustrates the problem. The school board member, who had been a vocal opponent of in-school suspension, noticed a group of adolescents while he was at a shopping mall during the school day. They were leaning over a balcony and spitting on people passing below. He asked them, "What are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be in school?" Their response was, "We got kicked out." When he asked why, their response was, "Wwe didn't want to go to school today so we got ourselves caught smoking. They kicked us out for three days, so we can spend three days here and then go back." (The school board member immediately became a staunch supporter of the in-school suspension program at Pinehill.)

Much of the working day of high school administrators is spent in trying to shield teachers from the distractions caused by inattentive, disorderly or disruptive students in their classes. All of the principals and assistant principals we interviewed had been classroom teachers and they knew from experience the important role that students play in determining a teacher's success in the classroom and thus affect the quality of that teacher's work life. They recognized that a single student can seriously disrupt a classroom and they used a variety of measures to discourage and penalize inappropriate student behavior. They were frustrated, however, by the relatively narrow range of disciplinary alternatives they perceived were available to them and by the fact that some teachers rarely experienced disciplinary problems with students while for others such problems were a regular occurrence.

Action to Reduce Student Misbehavior

Principals frequently initiated activities designed to eliminate or mitigate causes of student misbehavior. As noted previously, each school we observed had either formal or informal support programs for students experiencing stress as a result of family fragmentation, for students attempting to deal with drug or alcohol dependency, and for students dealing with the suicide or attempted suicide of a friend or a relative. It should be emphasized that these programs were developed primarily to help students, not to protect teachers from having inattentive students in their classrooms. Principals recognized, however, that students distracted by family problems, by drug or alcohol dependency, or by suicide were unlikely to be highly engaged in academic activity or on-task in their classroom assignments. By providing support for students experiencing such problems, teachers were shielded from at least some of the behavioral problems which otherwise would be manifested in classrooms.

Principals were aware of the distraction which occurs when a student enters a classroom after instruction has begun. Although their efforts met with varying success, each of the schools we observed waged war against tardiness. For example, at Ulysses S.

Grant students who were tardy to a class reported to a special room. It was referred to as the "sweep room" because all tardy students were swept into it. Tardiness to class typically resulted in after-school detention and, if it occurred repeatedly, could result in assignment to in-school suspension.

Principals also were aware that an interruption of normal classroom activities is viewed as quite distracting, if not disrespectful, by teachers. The public address system found in most secondary schools is a prime offender in this regard. The public address systems in the schools we observed supposedly were to be used only at specified times, usually at the beginning and the end of the school day. Only in emergency situations was the public address system to be used while classes were in session. Although principals generally believed these restrictions were observed, teachers were of the opinion that too frequently the public address system was used indiscriminately to make trivial announcements during class time rather than being reserved for true emergencies.

Principals in each of the eight schools made it a point to tour the school building at least once or twice a day; they visited classrooms frequently; they often were present in the lunchroom and corridors before and after school and when classes were passing. Their presence was intended to encourage orderly behavior on the part of students and also enabled them to identify potentially troublesome situations and nip them in the bud.

In summary, the ways in which administrators worked with students and the ways in which they dealt with students who misbehaved in classrooms had important effects on the quality of teachers' work lives in two main areas: (1) the respect teachers were accorded by their students (and by administrators) and (2) the ability of teachers to maintain a pleasant and orderly working environment in their classes. Through their involvement in pupil discipline and other efforts to maintain a productive learning environment in the school, principals were able to at least partially shield teachers from the antics of disruptive students. Their primary motive in these activities was not to enhance teachers' quality of work life; it was to assure the safety and enhance the educational opportunities of students in the school. However, the result of these activities often enabled teachers to give their attention to teaching rather than to student discipline.

Some Comments and Conclusions

After "shadowing" secondary school administrators in the schools in our sample during routine work days and interviewing them about their jobs, we were struck by how frequently the

principal was cast as the person in the middle, often caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place. A portion of the principal's working day was spent shielding teachers (and other staff members) from those who sought to impose their will, gain favorable treatment, or exert demands upon them. This observation makes sense, however, when one considers that school principals occupy middle-management positions in the school district's organizational hierarchy--subordinate to the board of education and superintendent; superordinate to teachers and other school-level administrators. That they are sometimes subject to demands and expectations from superiors which conflict with the demands and expectations of subordinates is understandable. A school principal, however, also must deal with the demands and expectations of another important set of stakeholders--parents and community members. To accommodate, much less satisfy, the conflicting demands and expectations of these various groups can become exceedingly difficult, if not impossible.

The conflicting demands and expectations described in this paper help explain why principals do not often talk about the quality of work life of teachers in their school and do not accord enhancing the quality of teachers' work life their number one priority. Their organizational superiors, as well as parents and community members, evaluate schools (and implicitly, principals) on the basis of how much students learn--typically based on standardized test scores or success in admission to the "right" colleges, not on the basis of how teachers feel about the school as a workplace. This is not to say that principals are oblivious to or unconcerned about the quality of teachers' work life. Rather, quality of teacher work life is but one of several factors that principals must consider when choosing a course of action and it may, on occasion, come out second best. It is unlikely that principals will give the quality of teacher work life higher priority in their decisions until they have persuasive evidence that it is strongly and positively related with student performance.

Two important revisions in our thinking about teachers' engagement occurred during the course of this research. As Metz (1988) stated:

> We learned that, since engagement is largely an intrapsychic state, finely calibrated measures of its intensity, beyond the rough categories of low, middle or high, are difficult to make....We also learned....to appreciate the transitive quality of engagement. Engagement must always be engagement with something (p. 2).

Principals and other school-level administrators found it difficult to talk about teacher engagement as an abstract concept. They were much more comfortable discussing a teacher in terms of his or her engagement <u>with</u> something--an experimental

program, the school chorus, a science project. They were able to identify individual teachers who they thought were either highly engaged or almost totally disengaged ("burned out" was their descriptor), but found it difficult to draw fine distinctions as to intermediate levels of engagement.

Theoretical Considerations

Early in this paper it was noted that, as organizations, schools can be viewed from more than one perspective. Mention was made of Thompson's (1967) propositions that organizations operating under norms of rationality would seek to buffer their technical core from environmental influences, would seek to smooth input and output transactions, and would try to anticipate and adapt to environmental changes not susceptible to buffering or smoothing.

Many of the activities we have described can be categorized as buffering or smoothing in the sense that these terms were used by Thompson. Examples of buffering can be seen in situations where the principal shielded teachers from central office policies or personnel; in situations where the principal mediated disputes between a parent and a teacher; in situations where the principal worked to resolve disputes or misunderstandings between members of the school faculty; and in situations where the principal removed insubordinate or disruptive students from a teacher's classroom either temporarily or permanently. These actions could be interpreted as attempts to buffer the technical core of the school from environmental influences which threatened to disturb the educational production process.

Some actions taken by principals could be interpreted as attempts to smooth input or output transactions. Examples of smoothing could be interpreted from activities such as organizing support groups for students who were under stress; including parents and community members as members of advisory committees; and establishing in-school suspension programs which attempted to reform the behavior of students.

We noted earlier that some writers have developed loose-coupling theories in which schools are viewed as consisting of loosely connected structural elements in which the bureaucratic structure of the school is essentially disconnected from instruction. The data obtained from our observations and interviews can also be interpreted from a loose-coupling perspective. That is, actions taken by the principal could be viewed as attempts to either tighten or loosen connections between the school and significant stakeholders, teachers and administrators. Activities to increase the involvement of parents and community members in school activities--holding an open home, establishing advisory committees, using community volunteers--can be viewed as attempts to tighten the connection

between the school and important stakeholders. Similarly, the skillful use of staff development programs to build faculty cohesion, stimulate interest in new programs or teaching methods, and achieve consensus on values and norms can be interpreted as attempts to tighten the connection between the instructional and administrative components of the organization. In short, we found both the rational bureaucratic and the loose-coupling perspectives to be useful in categorizing the actions of principals which affected the quality of teachers' work life.

Concerning whether schools should be regarded as rational bureaucracies or loosely coupled systems, we found evidence of both types in the eight secondary schools we studied. Cherry Grove North, for example, seemed to fit the rational bureaucratic model quite well. Pinehill, on the other hand, could best be described as a loosely coupled system in which the bureaucratic structure was largely disconnected from instruction. The other schools, however, were not as easily classified as one or the other of these types. It appeared, based on our data from these eight schools, that the categories "rational bureaucracy" and "loosely coupled system" represented the two ends of a continuum rather than a clear dichotomy.

We observed a much higher level of formalization (rules, regulations, operating procedures) at the managerial level then at the technical level. Teachers were, by and large, given a great deal of freedom within their classroom. Although teachers generally were required to either submit lesson plans to the principal or have them on file, and textbooks provided a least common denominator for a given subject, teachers generally were free to organize their classes and conduct instruction as they saw fit. At the managerial level, however, rules, regulations, and standard operating procedures were much in evidence. Every school had a student handbook which laid out in chapter and verse the expectations for student behavior and the penalties for disobedience. Of course, principals exercised some discretion in student disciplinary cases but generally the rules were enforced consistently. Contracts between the teachers' organization and the school board also served to regularize actions at the managerial level.

Quality of Teachers' Work Life

Many actions by principals and other administrators in these eight schools could be related directly to the indicators of quality of work life which were identified from the literature on this topic. Respect accorded teachers by relevant adults (and students) clearly was affected by the actions of principals. Teachers' participation in decisions that affected their work setting could be either facilitated or discouraged by the principal. Similarly, principals were in a position to stimulate professional interaction and collaboration among teachers or to

erect road blocks to teacher interaction and collaboration. We saw little evidence of structures or procedures that permitted teachers to obtain frequent feedback about the specific effects of their work on student learning. Several of the principals provided opportunities for teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills and an opportunity to try out new ideas using means such as carefully planned staff development programs, sending teachers to professional meetings and conventions, and providing resources to support the development of new instructional programs and activities. Principals generally tried very hard, although not always successfully, to see that teachers had resources adequate to carry out their job and that they were able to maintain an orderly working environment in their classrooms. Finally, we observed a few instances in which principals took actions which might serve to increase the congruence between a teacher's personal goals. In summary, we found ample evidence that principals' actions directly affected the quality of teachers' work life on at least five of the seven indicators used as criteria in this study.

End Notes

1. The author expresses appreciation to Terry Deal, Karen Louis, Mary Metz, Kent Peterson and Stewart Purkey for their comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this paper. This paper is the better for their constructive criticism but the author cannot evade responsibility for the faults which remain.

2. The research team for this project consisted of the writer and a research assistant, Jeffrey Jacobson. At the same time that we observed the principals, assistant principals, and the department chairs, a research team headed by Mary Haywood Metz observed and interviewed teachers in the same schools. The work of the two research teams was closely coordinated so that both administrators and teachers were observed and interviewed during the same period of time.

3. For more detailed descriptions of the eight schools and the communities from which their students were drawn, see Metz (1988).

4. The term "principal" is used both specifically to refer to the chief administrative officer of the school, and generically, to refer to members of the administrative staff of the school including assistant principals, dean of students, etc.

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